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# Sauget, Cahokia Pollution Report May Aid Cleanup

By Phil Luciano

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — State environmentalists are hoping that a recently released report detailing widespread hazardous waste pollution in Sauget and Cahokia will convince federal officials to pay for cleaning up the area.

The report, of more than 1,000 pages, is the product of a two-year, \$2 million study of toxic contamination in the area.

Its findings will greatly aid the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency when it applies for money from the Superfund, a federal program that provides money to clean up hazardous waste sites across the nation, said Keri Luly, agency spokeswoman.

Despite the findings, Luly stressed that it was unlikely that residents of the Sauget-Cahokia area could come in contact with the pollutants. No one lives on the contaminated soil, and airborne particles do not travel very far, she said.

The study focuses on two pieces of land in Sauget and Cahokia totaling 220 acres.

One tract is in the shape of an inverted "L" along the Mississippi River; the other plot, shaped like a rectangle and split by Dead Creek, is less than a quarter mile east of the first site.

The report states that the agency found "substantial and widespread contamination" of soil, surface water, ground water and sediment at the test sites. Also, traces of air pollution were found in some places.

Test results show that the area, which local industries used for decades as a toxic dumping ground, is contaminated with numerous hazardous substances, including phenols, polychlorinated bi-phenyls (PCBs), lead and chromium.

Luly said long-term exposure to those toxins could result in various health problems, including cancer and death.

The area hardest hit by the pollution, the north end of Dead Creek, has been fenced off so no one has access to it.

She said the creek had been dammed, possibly by industry, many years ago and has been virtually stagnant since the 1960s. Thus, pollutants

cannot be carried downstream, she said.

Contamination by ground water is unlikely, Luly said, because the 20 houses close to the toxic sites are tapped into municipal water systems that draw water from the Mississippi

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## Superfund List Adds 12 Sites

By The Associated Press

Twelve sites in Illinois would be added to the federal Superfund priority list for toxic waste cleanups, and one would be dropped under recommendations issued by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

From a landfill in Waukegan to a former oil storage tank site in East Cape Girardeau, the new Illinois sites could receive federal evaluation and cleanup funding if they are approved for the list after a period of public comment, officials said.

Stan Black, a community liaison with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, said Tuesday that the potential addition of the sites to the federal list was welcome news because it could mean that money will be provided for extensive testing and cleanup where problems have been identified.

"We certainly don't have enough resources as a state agency to do the kinds of investigations and the kinds of remedial actions that are needed at all of those sites," he said.

Black said he heard that as much as \$12 million might eventually be available for the average site on the federal Superfund list.

He said that 17 Illinois sites already were on the list and 10 more were proposed in January 1987 but had yet to be approved for the final list. According to Black, a 60-day period has been provided for comment concerning new sites recommended Monday.

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And ground water, which travels slowly, moves west toward the Mississippi River and away from any of the wells in the outlying area, Luly said.

But she was quick to add that just because the pollution seemed to be confined did not eliminate the chance of some adverse effects.

"Most of the stuff is buried, so it's not an immediate threat," she said. But "what's in the (Mississippi) River,

Philip Luly, said in the past that it was not a problem because it will be cleaned up. But that isn't wise.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is planning a study to determine whether polluted, leaching ground water is contaminating the river and its fish, she said.

Cleaning up the area could help decrease ground-water contamination, Luly said. Also, the pollutants need to be removed if the local governments hope to develop housing or businesses on the land, she said.

The report states that the problem could be worse than results indicate because "the complete extent of contamination resulting from past waste-disposal activities . . . has not yet been determined."

Luly noted, "The site has had so many types of chemicals . . . it's hard to say. This is what the problem is."

It's also hard to say how big a price tag the cleanup project would carry. Luly would only estimate that it would cost "millions and millions. There's just no way to know at this point."

Agency officials have long known of the need to clean up the area, Luly said. However, officials have said that the state cannot afford the project.

The state applied for Superfund money several years ago, but was

not able to get it.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which administers Superfund, is developing new criteria to determine which cleanup projects will get funding. The combination of a new scoring system and the thorough report on the Saugee-Cabot sites improves Illinois' chances of receiving federal funding, Luly said.

The report mentions several local industries, both in operation and defunct, that could have contributed to the contamination. They include Monsanto Co., Cerro Copper Co., Midwest Rubber Co. and Waggoner Trucking Co.

But, Luly added, companies outside the region also are likely to have brought toxic waste to the area for disposal. And she said much of the dumping occurred before many environmental laws were enacted.

So far, no companies have come forward to offer to pay for the cleanup, Luly said. If the U.S. EPA decides to provide funding, it can collect later from parties responsible for the pollution up to three times the cleanup costs.

The agency will learn by next spring whether it will receive federal money, Luly said.

*Phil Luciano is a graduate student at Sangamon State University and an intern at the Post-Dispatch's Springfield bureau.*